Are you StormReady?

56 StormReady Counties in Georgia

StormReady recognized counties are shown in tan (as of 1/1/07). TsunamiReady counties are shown in pink. For information on how your county can become StormReady, see page 5.

The Importance of StormReady

Lans P. Rothfusz, Chairman StormReady Advisory Board

One thousand communities and counties can't be wrong! In the summer of 2006, the StormReady program passed a significant milestone by recognizing its 1,000[th] community. In just seven years, StormReady grew from an idea to a national program with over 1,000 participants. There is good reason for the growth – StormReady has been proven to save lives in the communities that participate in it. Are you StormReady?

As you can see in the map above, Georgia is nearly one-third of the way to being completely StormReady. As of January 1, 2007, there are 56 Georgia counties recognized in the program. The number of participants has grown slowly over the past two years, but they are growing. Counties are encouraged to start the StormReady recognition process by contacting the Warning Coordination Meteorologist at their supporting National Weather Service office.

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StormReady Changes for 2007

As the current StormReady counties already know, the re-recognition process occurs every three years. Three years from the first recognition, the county (usually the Emergency Manager) will send a letter to the National Weather Service informing them that the criteria used in the first recognition are still being met. With a quick review by the Warning Coordination Meteorologist and the Georgia StormReady Advisory Board (GSAB), the next three year recognition usually occurs.

After six years in the program, each county must reapply from "scratch." This is to ensure the StormReady program in Georgia remains strong and adapts to changing technology, personnel, and weather risks. Because StormReady started in Georgia in 2001 (six years ago), 2007 will see the first round of "returning applicants." To make the reapplications (and any new applications) easier to achieve, the GSAB has implemented several new features and changes to the guidelines of the StormReady program beginning this year. These changes are intended to give the applicants greater flexibility in reaching the level of preparedness prescribed by the StormReady program while strengthening the existing program. These new additions and changes are shown below.

Within each guideline category, there are a set number of elements, based on population, the applicant must complete in order to qualify for the guideline. A few elements are required, but most are optional. An applicant chooses which elements they have achieved from a "menu" of optional elements. More information on this process is available from your local Warning Coordination Meteorologist.

<u>Addition to Guideline 1   (Communications)</u>

Local SkyWarn Net Coordination in EOC (Optional)

Storm Spotters have proven an invaluable resource to the NWS and Emergency Managers in times of hazardous weather. To ensure the rapid and effective exchange of crucial information during severe weather episodes, an applying agency should have established or demonstrated the existence of a Local SkyWarn Network supporting their jurisdiction. This local network can be coordinated from neighboring counties, but the spotters must be physically located in the applying agency's county. Establishing a Local SkyWarn Network can be accomplished through local ARES or ARRL contacts. This guideline must include the following:

- A defined amateur radio link to a Regional SkyWarn Network Controller at the NWS, where appropriate.

- A specified frequency upon which the Local SkyWarn Network operates.

- A written plan for the activation of a Local SkyWarn Network and spotters.

- A roster of spotters and Local Network Controllers.

- A specified and fixed location from which Local Network Controllers operate the net.

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StormReady Changes for 2007

(Continued from page 2)

Addition to Guideline 3   (Hydrometeorological Monitoring)

Severe Weather Contact Roster (Optional)

A list of amenable contacts (public and governmental) should be provided to the local NWS office for the purpose of reporting severe weather events. This list must be updated annually. The contacts should be evenly distributed throughout the county and are invited to severe weather spotters' classes. This information can and should be collected at the spotter classes.

Additions to Guideline 4   (Local Warning Dissemination)

Siren Testing (Required)

If a community has outdoor warning sirens, they must be tested at least quarterly, with documentation showing the completion of tests for the twelve months prior to the Site Visit.

NWR in all Incorporated Communities (Required)

NOAA Weather Radios must be placed in all publicly-accessed government buildings (e.g., schools, libraries, community centers, public service offices, etc.) located in all incorporated communities throughout the applying county.

Addition to Guideline 5   (Community Preparedness)

Establishment of a Lightning Plan (Optional)

Lightning is the second deadliest weather-related killer in the U.S. Counties with a written and implemented plan of action for lightning safety at ballparks, soccer fields, and other recreational facilities can count it as one of the requirements under the Community Preparedness guideline.

Increase the Number of Annual Weather Safety Talks (Requirement)

The number of annual weather safety talks are 1, 2, 5, and 8 for populations of <2,500; 2,500-14,999; 15,000 – 40,000; and >40,000; respectively.

Addition to Guideline 6   (Administrative)

NWS Participation in Appropriate Local Exercises (Optional)

Counties conducting local exercises of any type (e.g., hazardous materials, major fire, search and rescue, severe weather, flooding, etc.) are encouraged to include the National Weather Service in the planning and execution of the exercise. Including the NWS in one exercise each year will qualify for one of the items in this guideline.
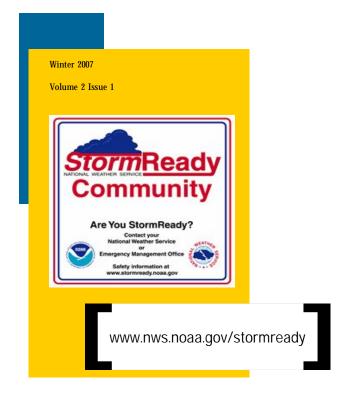
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StormReady a Success in Columbia County

Steve Naglic, WCM & StormReady Advisory Board Member
Pam Tucker, Columbia EMA Director

The StormReady program has benefited Columbia County in many ways. The requirements to become a StormReady Community outline the specific equipment, community preparedness programs, and other administrative measures that are needed to make our community safer during severe weather events. Officials are more apt to support local preparedness programs when these initiatives are provided in organized detail and by following the StormReady program.   For the past six years, we have seen vast improvements in our over-all local emergency preparedness program. Our government leaders and citizens feel a great "peace of mind" that all steps needed to be prepared for severe weather are being taken in our community. Also, the StormReady signage throughout the community constantly promotes a "weather safety" thought process with our citizens and has caused many citizens to seek more information on how they can keep their families safe.

As an example, Columbia County had a downburst wind event in May 2005 that caused damage to many homes, including blowing of large business signs over 100 yards down a busy highway. Prior to the event, trained spotters had notified us of severe weather developing in the Appling area. We passed the information along to the National Weather Service, who also received the information via our SKYWARN HAM radio network, and a warning was issued. We used all of our dissemination resources and there were no injuries due to the speedy teamwork. People were aware of the storm and even though you can't stop the damage, StormReady actions can clearly save lives.

StormReady Community

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Are You StormReady?
Contact your
National Weather Service
or
Emergency Management Office

Safety information at
www.stormready.noaa.gov

[www.nws.noaa.gov/stormready]

StormReady is a National Weather Service program designed, implemented, and managed in partnership with State and Local Emergency Management Officials. It's purpose is to help communities and counties reduce the potential for disastrous, weather-related consequences. Communities recognized as "StormReady" have the infrastructure, systems, and practices in place to save lives and protect property when hazardous weather strikes. In short, StormReady Communities are prepared.

How You Can Become StormReady

Nearly 90% of all presidentially-declared disasters in the United States are weather-related, leading to nearly 500 deaths and over $14 billion in damages annually. To help communities guard against the ravages of severe weather, the National Weather Service designed the StormReady program. Storm-Ready helps prepare communities with the communication and safety skills they need to save lives and protect property.

To be officially Storm-Ready, a community must:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center.

- Have more than one way to receive severe weather warnings and forecasts and to alert the public.

- Have a system that monitors weather conditions locally.

- Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars.

- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

How to Apply

There are three steps to becoming StormReady: Written application, verification visit(s), and Storm-Ready Advisory Board action. Applicants with jurisdiction over a community and unincorporated areas of the surrounding county need only submit one application with the combined populations.

The application requests a basic accounting of emergency technology and a brief narrative describing preparedness and planning activities. The narrative aids in assessing such things as the hazardous weather plan, exercises and public safety programs. After reviewing the application, the StormReady Advisory Board will assign a team to visit the applicant and formally discuss the application. Contact your local National Weather Service office to begin the process towards making your community Storm-Ready.

Deborah Connell, Editor-in-Chief of the Georgia National Weather Service StormReady Newsletter